Beginning of gold exploration

566. SHRI JAGIR SINGH DARD:
DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether anywhere in the country has the gold exploration begun; and

(b) if so, the details thereof; if not when will it begin?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDERA PRASAD BHAISHYA): (a) and (b) Exploration of mineral resources including gold is a continuous activity, Geological Survey of India (GSI) is a premier organisation in the country in mineral exploration. The GSI has undertaken gold investigation during the last 3 years (1994-1997) in the States of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Sikkim, West Bengal, Andaman Island, Bihar, Assam and Meghalaya.

Negotiations with Continental Resource Ltd. of Canada

567. SHRI SANATAN BISI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for mining purposes in "Gandamardan" the Government of Orissa is negotiating with Continental Resource Limited of Canada as reported in daily Oriya "Anupam Bharat" dated 29th August, 1997; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As per the information furnished by the State Govt. of Orissa, a Joint Venture agreement has been signed on 16.4.1997 between M/s Orissa Mining Corporation Limited (OMC), a State Government Undertaking and M/s Continental Resources Limited, Canada (CRL) for the sole purpose of exploring and exploiting the Gandhamardan Bauxite deposits. State Govt. of Orissa have also informed that M/s OMC have filed three applications for grant of Mining Leases in Gandhamardan Bauxite deposit area.

Rehabilitation of BGML

568. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken steps to rehabilitate BGML at Kolar Gold Fields through joint venture by induction of a private co-promoter;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, whether there is any possibility of winding up the above company under the provisions of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Committee has been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines, to identify a co-promoter(s) for the purpose of revival and rehabilitation of BGML at Kolar Gold Fields.

(c) In case a suitable co-promoter for rehabilitating the company through Joint Venture could not be found the future of the Company will be decided as per the relevant provisions of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, (SICA), 1985.

Negotiations with foreign firms for prospecting diamonds and gold

569. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether negotiations are going on with foreign firms for prospecting

diamonds and gold at several places in the country; and

(b) if so, the names of the places where prospecting is proposed to be done and the parties that are in the fray?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) The National Mineral Policy, 1993 envisages that induction of foreign participation in exploration and mining for high value and scarce minerals shall be pursued. Foreign equity investment in joint ventures in mining promoted by Indian Companies would be encouraged. While foreign investment in equity would normally be limited to 50%, this limitation would not apply to captive mines of any mineral processing industry. Enhanced equity holding can also be considered on case to case basis. The foreign firms which intend to invest in prospecting of diamond and gold have to obtain the approval of FIPB in the first instance.

As per Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 mining rights can be given only to a Indian National or a company defined in sub-section (1) of section (3) of the Companies Act, 1956. Provided that in respect of any mineral specified in the First Schedule, no prospecting licences or mining lease shall be granted except with the previous approval of the Central Government. The applications for grant of Prospecting Licence have to be filed and processed by respective State Governments as per the provisions of Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 and the rules made thereunder.

21 cases for grant of aerial prospecting licence for gold etc. have been approved by Central Government as per proposals from the respective State Governments. No aerial prospecting licence for diamond has been approved till date by the Central Government.

Machinery used by the GSI

570. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the machinery used by the Geological Survey of India are old aged and outdated;

(b) if so, the steps taken to ensure the modernisation and the replacement of the old machinery in Geological Survey of India; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDERA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) For want of replacement/renewal and upgradation due to resource constraints a large number of machinery and equipment in Geological Survey of India have become old.

(b) and (c) A sum of Rs. 936.95 crores has been projected as budget estimate for replacement/renewal and upgradation of machinery and equipment during IXth Plan period.

Budget provision for GSI has been considerably enhanced during the current financial year 1997-98 to enable GSI to carry out essential replacement/renewal of mchinery and equipment.

Deletion of Limestone and Bauxite

571. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL:
SHRI ANATRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Gujarat has represented for the deletion of limestone and bauxite from the list of scheduled minerals shown in Schedule-I of the Mineral and Metals Regulation and Development Act, 1957;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the decision taken on the representation so far?